

SUPERFUND

Fact Sheet

COMMENCEMENT BAY **Tacoma, Washington**



U S ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY REGION

November 1999

EPA ANNOUNCES:

- **Proposed Cleanup Plans for Thea Foss, Wheeler Osgood, and Hylebos Waterways**
- **Proposed Bay-wide Sediment Disposal Plan**

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) invites your comments on our proposed cleanup plans for the Thea Foss, Wheeler Osgood, and Hylebos Waterways and our Bay-wide plan for disposal of all dredged contaminated sediments from all Commencement Bay waterways. We would like to invite you to a public meeting to hear about these proposals.

EPA WOULD LIKE YOUR INPUT

Please Attend a Public Meeting
December 8, 1999,
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
World Trade Center
3600 Port of Tacoma Road
Tacoma, WA

This fact sheet gives you a summary of the proposed cleanup plans and bay-wide sediment disposal plans. The full description of the proposed waterway cleanup and bay-wide sediment disposal plans can be found in an EPA document called a "Draft Explanation of Significant Differences" (ESD). This document is available for you to review on November 29 at the information repositories listed at the end of this fact sheet. You can request a copy be mailed to you by calling 1-800-424-3472, or you can download the document from EPA's Commencement Bay web page at <http://epainotes1.rtpnc.epa.gov:7777/r10/cleanup.nsf/sites/cbnt>. Scroll down to Decision Documents and click on "DRAFT Explanation of Significant Differences (ESD) for proposed sediment cleanup and disposal locations."

Please Submit Your Written Comments

During Our Public Comment Period
November 29, 1999 - January 3, 2000

You will also have the opportunity to make verbal comments at the public meeting or you can mail your comments before January 3, 2000 to:

Allison Hiltner, EPA Project Manager
1200 Sixth Avenue, MS/ECL-111
Seattle, WA 98101

In This Fact Sheet You Can Find Information on...

- Proposed cleanup plan for Thea Foss, Wheeler Osgood, and Hylebos waterways
- Proposed sediment disposal sites
- What is being done about source control
- Information on public meeting to discuss the Commencement Bay bay-wide habitat assessment
- Commencement Bay background
- Where you can find more information/who to call

Workshop Presentation/ Habitat Assessment

We would also like to invite you to a workshop presentation to discuss the Commencement Bay bay-wide habitat assessment that is being completed by Charles (Si) Simenstad, a researcher from the University of Washington School of Fisheries. His report is an assessment of the Bay focusing on restoring marine life and the recovery of salmon. This report is one tool being used to help guide disposal site selection and planning of habitat enhancement projects in Commencement Bay. Come hear about the findings and the conclusions that can be drawn from this study. There will be an opportunity for questions and discussions during the workshop.

December 1, 1999, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
World Trade Center
3600 Port of Tacoma Road
Tacoma, WA

What are the Proposed Cleanup Plans for the Waterways?

• Proposed Cleanup Plan for Thea Foss and Wheeler Osgood Waterways

Approximately 24 acres in the waterways would be dredged to remove all contaminated sediments. Another 33 acres would be dredged to a specified depth, and then capped with clean sediments which would serve as a protective shield. The cap would be built to withstand erosion since some sites have a lot of water movement due to tides, boating or other activities. About 25 acres would be targeted for natural recovery (cleanup levels would be reached within a 10 year period) or enhanced natural recovery, which calls for clean material to be placed on top of contaminated sediments to speed up the natural recovery process. About 37 acres in the waterway would not need any cleanup.

Under this cleanup plan, between 620,000 and 650,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediments

would be dredged and placed in a confined disposal site. Much of this dredging would happen in channel areas. Except for the head of the Thea Foss Waterway, dredging would keep the existing navigational depths and allow for future maintenance dredging. Remaining contaminated sediments would be covered with a cap to prevent them from coming into contact with people or marine life. The cap would be placed low enough in the waterway to allow for future maintenance dredging.

Oil seeps have been found in sediments at the head of Thea Foss Waterway. In order to control these seeps and prevent them from spreading to the rest of the waterway, the seeps would be covered with an absorbent material which would be part of the cap. The sediments would be capped with clean material. In addition, a metal sheet pile wall would be placed across the waterway and a mud-like vertical barrier wall (slurry wall) may be placed along the western bank to contain the oil.

• Proposed Cleanup Plan for the Hylebos Waterway

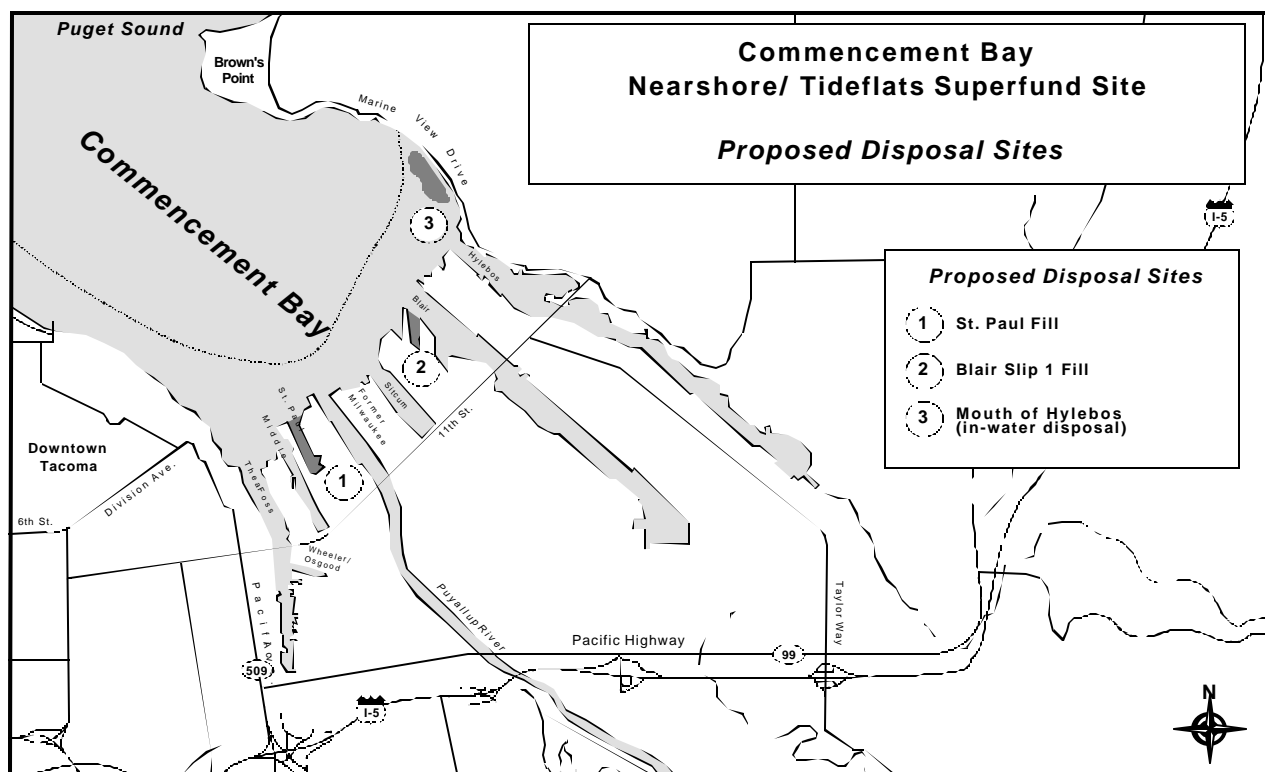
The total area of the Hylebos Waterway is 285 acres. Under this cleanup plan, 85 acres would be dredged, 11 acres would be capped, and 20 acres are predicted to naturally recover over a 10 year period. Much of the navigation channel would be dredged, and EPA is proposing that intertidal areas be capped. However, we would closely examine the option of dredging during the design phase. This cleanup plan would result in the dredging of approximately 940,000 cubic yards of sediments.

Since the Hylebos Waterway is a federally authorized navigation channel, additional dredging may be included as part of the

Hylebos Waterway cleanup. EPA is working with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to find out if the Superfund cleanup can be combined with additional Corps dredging of the navigation channel.

Proposed Disposal Sites

This past summer, EPA solicited concerns from the public on our proposed short list of disposal sites. We received about 20 letters and took verbal comments at a community meeting. EPA considered these comments in developing this proposed cleanup plan and disposal sites. We also addressed many concerns by naming them as conditions on how to build the proposed disposal sites.



EPA proposes some combination of the **St. Paul Waterway, Blair Slip 1, and Mouth of Hylebos Waterway** as in-water disposal sites for cleanup of the Commencement Bay waterways. All three sites would be needed to hold the contaminated sediments from the waterways. EPA's projected costs for cleanup assumed that contaminated sediments could be placed in the disposal areas closest to the cleanup site. For example, costs for the Thea Foss/Wheeler Osgood sediments were based on disposal in the St. Paul Waterway.

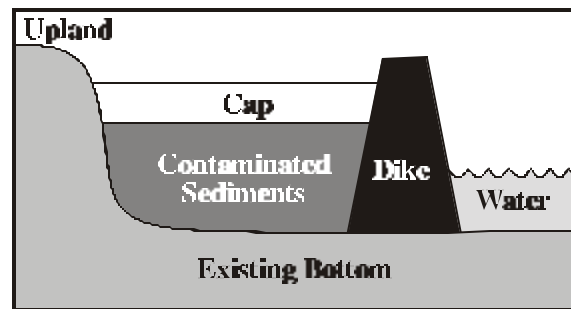
The projected cleanup cost for the Thea Foss Wheeler Osgood Waterway, including disposal at the St. Paul Waterway, is \$36,880,000. The projected cleanup cost for Hylebos Waterway, including disposal at Blair Slip 1 and Mouth of Hylebos, is \$39,063,000. While these disposal sites are expected to be able to hold all of the material, any sediments that could not be contained in these three disposal sites would need to be placed in an upland landfill.

Any in-water fill which impacts marine life requires mitigation under the federal Clean Water Act. Mitigation means creating or enhancing an area to make a healthy habitat where animals can live and reproduce. Mitigation plans have been developed for some of these disposal sites, and are being reviewed by EPA. EPA is seeking input from Natural Resource agencies and the public on the mitigation plans.

• St. Paul Waterway

The St. Paul nearshore fill proposal would mean building a containment wall and dike across the mouth of the waterway and filling the area behind the wall with contaminated sediments. New intertidal habitat would be built on the face of the wall. The area within the wall would need to be deepened to hold the large amount of dredged sediments. The capacity of St. Paul varies from 600,000 to nearly 800,000 cubic yards, depending on the excavation depth and the steepness of the wall and side slopes. Approximately 13.6 acres of aquatic habitat

would be filled and covered with a 6 to 7 foot thick cap. Simpson could expand its facilities on top of the filled area. Construction would also require moving the log haul-out facility from the head of the waterway to the mouth of Middle Waterway.



Example of Nearshore Disposal

• Blair Slip 1

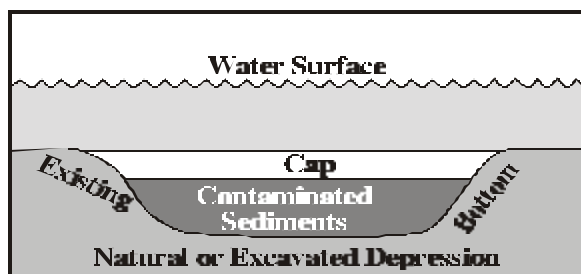
EPA proposes to fill the Blair Slip 1 nearshore disposal site with approximately 640,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediments. The Port of Tacoma has applied for a permit to fill this slip to the ground surface with clean fill to build a new terminal, but has agreed to use contaminated sediments for the fill if required by EPA. The project would fill 15 acres of aquatic land. The Port proposes to build a habitat area at nearby Slip 5 to compensate for the fill. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers is reviewing the Port's permit application. They have generally accepted the Port's proposal, but have not reached agreement on the amount of mitigation required.

• Mouth of Hylebos Waterway

This proposed in-water (confined aquatic) disposal site would involve digging a large hole in an area outside the Mouth of Hylebos Waterway where contaminated sediments would be buried. Several feet of clean material would be placed on the top to seal in the contaminants. The location of the disposal site

would be below the water deep enough to allow normal maritime activity in the area to continue. The exact place, depth, size and shape would be decided in the design phase of the cleanup. The design and construction of the disposal site would have to meet the following conditions:

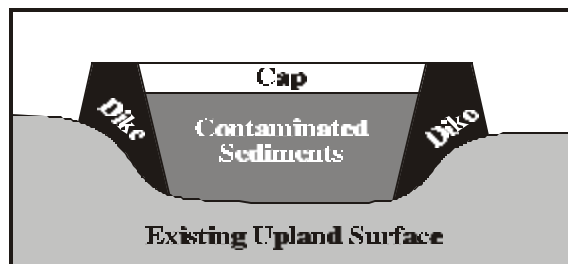
- water quality in wells used by nearby residents must not be impacted
- be physically strong, resist erosion, and be stable in the event of an earthquake
- consider concerns expressed by homeowners, including boat access to homes, and protecting homes from wave action
- minimize impacts to homeowners from noise, lighting, and traffic
- habitat areas next to the site must be protected from contamination during and after construction
- include habitat restoration to benefit marine life, especially salmon.



Example of In-Water (Confined Aquatic) Disposal

EPA proposes to use this site only for excess material that cannot fit in the other two sites. This site would hold 300,000+ cubic yards of sediment, depending on the amount of additional dredging proposed by the Corps and other parties at the Hylebos Waterway. One of the benefits of this site is that it could be built to include a habitat restoration project in an area identified as important for salmon habitat.

The design for all Commencement Bay disposal sites must show that the sites could be built to prevent contaminants from getting out, and that they could be built to withstand such



Example of Upland Disposal

disturbances as erosion and earthquakes. Long-term monitoring would also be required, as well as a backup plan if monitoring were to detect contaminants being released from the site.

Any sediments that would not fit in the three disposal sites would be placed in an upland disposal site. The use of an upland disposal site means placing contaminated sediments in a landfill away from surface water. The excess water would have to be removed from the sediments before moving them to a landfill approved to take hazardous wastes. The dewatering process has to be managed and the water collected may have to be treated before it is discharged.

What's Being Done About Source Control?

Source control means creating ways to reduce or eliminate releases of problem chemicals into the waterways so that EPA can begin sediment cleanup. Controlling sources of contamination is critical before cleanup of sediments begins. In 1989, EPA and Ecology agreed that Ecology would take the lead on source control actions that affect the waterways in Commencement Bay. Ecology uses many regulatory tools to address upland and groundwater sources, as well as direct discharges to the waterways. Ecology reports its source control progress to EPA and consults with EPA on whether to move forward with sediment cleanup actions.

Source control at the Thea Foss Waterway has been particularly challenging because it has three segments, each with its own unique

source control issues. The Wheeler/Osgood and mouth of the Thea Foss waterways are controlled for various sources of contamination. Controlling contaminant sources to the head of Thea Foss is especially difficult because it is a fairly small area receiving stormwater drainage from a large upland area, and many are older industrial sources.

The City of Tacoma has been using the Stormwater Management Program to control municipal sources to storm drains at Thea Foss and Wheeler Osgood Waterways. Although these are not the only sources of contamination, they are major ones. Under this program, the City has conducted hundreds of inspections, required businesses to control contaminated discharges the best they can, and required cleaning of catch basins. These actions, in addition to Ecology's efforts, have eliminated or reduced many major sources of contamination to the waterways. As part of this proposed cleanup plan, EPA would require continued and possibly expanded control of potential contaminant sources to these City storm drains to make sure the quality of sediments remains at the cleanup level. Part of the design for sediment cleanup includes controlling seeps within the waterway itself. Ecology is taking the lead on controlling the Tacoma Coal Gas site source.

On the Hylebos Waterway, Ecology has identified 10 major ongoing sources to sediment contamination, as well as 19 other ongoing sources. These sources are being addressed through a variety of permit and cleanup actions. Soil, ground, bank, and surface water sources are being controlled. Ecology has completed source control work at all but three of these facilities, and plans to complete all Hylebos Waterway source control work by the summer of 2000.

While more source control still needs to take place, it is and will continue to be crucial to continue to prevent recontamination to the Commencement Bay waterways. In addition,

the waterways would be monitored to make sure source control is working.

Background

The Commencement Bay Nearshore/Tideflats Superfund site is located in Tacoma, Washington at the southern end of Puget Sound. EPA placed the site on the Superfund List or National Priorities List (NPL) on September 8, 1983. Since the late 1800's, shipbuilding, oil refining, chemical manufacturing and storage, and other industrial activities have caused hazardous waste contamination of the land and water in the Commencement Bay area. Many of these contaminants have impacted marine life. The cleanup goal is to once again have a healthy marine environment and protect people from eating contaminated seafood from the bay. This goal was established in EPA's 1989 cleanup plan.

The site included the Hylebos, Sitcum, Milwaukee, St. Paul, Middle, Wheeler-Osgood, and Thea Foss waterways, the Puyallup River upstream to the Interstate-5 bridge, and adjacent land areas. The sediment cleanups have been completed for the St. Paul and Sitcum waterways. The cleanup of the Sitcum Waterway was combined with some of the fill of the Milwaukee Waterway to expand a marine terminal facility. EPA deleted portions of the site in 1996 because cleanups had been completed or studies had been done to show that no cleanup was required. These areas are the St. Paul and Blair waterways and part of the land transferred to the Puyallup Tribe. EPA is now working to clean up four remaining waterways: Hylebos, Thea Foss, Wheeler Osgood, and Middle.

Where You Can Find Other Technical Documents - Information Repositories

In Tacoma:

Tacoma Main Public Library*
1102 Tacoma Avenue South
Northwest Room

Citizens for a Healthy Bay
917 Pacific Avenue, Suite 406
(253)383-2429

Please call for an appointment if information is
needed after business hours.

In Seattle:

U. S. Environmental Protection Agency*
1200 Sixth Avenue
Records Center - 7th Floor

* Indicates Information Repository, where the official Administrative Record can be found

*You can also find documents related to the Commencement Bay Nearshore Tidelands/Superfund site at the
web address: <http://epainotes1.rtpnc.epa.gov:7777/r10/cleanup.nsf/sites/cbnt>.*

*Scroll down to Decision Documents and click on "DRAFT Explanation of Significant Differences (ESD)
for proposed sediment cleanup and disposal locations."*

For More Information

For more information, please call:

Allison Hiltner, EPA Project Manager,
at (206)553-2140

Howard Orlean, EPA Project Manager,
at (206)553-2851

Kris Flint, EPA Project Manager, Source Control
at (206)553-8155

Jeanne O'Dell, Community Involvement,
at (206)553-6919

Debra Packard, Community Involvement,
at (206)553-0247

You may also call our toll free number:
1-800-424-4372

EPA Wants to Hear from You

EPA strives to provide you with useful
environmental information. Please
feel free to call, write or email us to
let us know how we can improve our
fact sheets to suit your needs. You
can email Jeanne O'Dell at
odell.jeanne@epamail.epa.gov.

We are exploring electronic
distribution of future fact sheets.
Would you like to be notified by
email that this information is
available on our web site?



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Region 10 (ECO-081)
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle WA 98101

SUPERFUND FACT SHEET
Commencement Bay
Tacoma, Washington